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A Reflection on the Words of the *Jesus Prayer*

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We probably all know or have heard about the *Jesus Prayer*: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner — in Slavonic: Господи Исусе Христе, Сыне Божий, помилуй мя грешнаго / грешную. — Hospodi Isuse Christe, Syne Bozhij, pomiluj mja hrishnahe (masculine) / hrishnuju.(feminine); in Greek (original): Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐλέησόν με τὸν ἁμαρτωλὸν¹. This is a very personal prayer that can also be said for others by substituting the persons name and the intention instead of saying “me a sinner.” We may know that there are techniques whereby this prayer, said initially with the deliberation of the mind, eventually becomes what is called the “prayer of the heart,”² said constantly and independent of conscious effort. We may also know that we can use a *chotki* — the knotted rope or chaplet³ — as another aid: a practical one for “counting” the number of times we say the prayer; and also a means of incorporating a tactile element, the sense of touch, into our prayer. Our Byzantine worship and prayer in very sensual, and so all the better when our posture, sense of smell and vision, and in this case touch, participate in our “lifting up of our hearts and minds to God” as the old (Baltimore) catechism taught so well. We may also know that the *Jesus Prayer* was fostered by the eastern monks known as hesychists,⁴ a word which means quiet⁵ — it is a prayer of contemplation. This simple prayer pertains to the spiritual life in its essence: our deification⁶ — *theōsis* / θέωσις: to become by grace what God is by nature.

¹ ἁμαρτωλός, ὄν sinful; sinner: adjective, no degree. There is no explicit feminine form.

² Fr. John Breck, “Prayer of the Heart: Sacrament of the Presence of God,” *St. Vlad. Theo. Quart.*, 39, 25-46 (1995).

³ See the informative article on the rosary in the old *Catholic Encyclopedia*, on line at: <http://newadvent.org/cathen/13184b.htm>, especially the section “II. IN THE GREEK CHURCH, CATHOLIC AND SCHISMATIC.”

⁴ From *hesychia*, ἡσυχία, ας f silence, quietness; e.g. Acts 22.2: παρέχω ἡσυχίαν, be quiet.

⁵ See for instance, *Orthodox Spirituality*, A Monk of the Eastern Church, 19.

⁶ Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu, “The Jesus Prayer and Deification,” *St. Vlad. Theo. Quart.*, 39, 3-24, (1995).

These facts and techniques are part of our heritage and they can be helpful in providing a broad background for saying this prayer with devotion. But I want to focus in this reflection on the prayer itself, that is, the words of the prayer, because the words, though simple, are deeply meaningful and theologically rich. Now it is not necessary to have a scholarly understanding of the words in order to pray. But our faith, and the faith conveyed to us in the divine/sacred writings, forms a rich tapestry of verbal images. And so, especially since I like these words, and like to meditate on the words of scripture, I offer you a study and meditation on the words of the *Jesus Prayer* — the threads of the tapestry — as one more aid for praying more fervently. It is not necessary to retain a knowledge of the details I present, and others may find different interpretations that give a different emphasis. Rather, I hope to indicate to some small extent the richness of the faith contained in this simple prayer.

So this is in a sense a study: Remember, however, as the noted theologian, Vladimir Lossky, says, in our Byzantine tradition theology and spirituality, study and prayer form a unity — the theologian is a saint and the saint is a theologian.⁷ Before I launch into this study/meditation I want to offer a personal testimony that is not earth shaking, but it is mine and therefore it is something that I have to offer from experience. There was a time, fairly recently, when I went through a kind of spiritual turmoil or crisis — not a crisis of faith, but of a spiritual emptiness and devastation, a sense of being let down and betrayed, not by God but by my fellow man. I was confiding this problem to a very dear priest, and was beyond the point of tears. After listening and offering me advice and comfort, this priest took my hands and asked me to pray so that he might pray with me — so that we might pray together. I felt so empty, so devastated, that at that moment even, it seemed, prayer had left me — I could not say or think of any words of prayer. I was, spiritually, on empty — but not quite. For then, like an old and faithful friend who is there in difficult times as well as good, I found myself saying the words of the *Jesus Prayer*. I have developed the spontaneous habit of saying this prayer periodically and especially when troubled, for instance when the mental “demons” are with me day or night, keeping me distracted or awake with silly, disturbing concerns. And so I readily testify to the worthwhile habit of saying this prayer often and to the efficacy of this beautiful prayer, a beauty that I hope will be enhanced by this study.

There are many and different word threads that can be followed: here are mine.

Lord Κύριε (*Kurie* or *Kyrie*)⁸

⁷ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 8-9.

⁸ *Lord Jesus Christ Son* are all in the vocative case (direct address) in the Greek.

This title is a word that unites Mankind’s encounter with God in both the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament this word is often applied to Jesus. But it is important to realize that in the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew into the Greek, this is the word that the translators used for the very frequently encountered divine name, יהוה (HVHY or HWHY), YHWH,⁹ which is probably pronounced *Yahweh*.¹⁰ The divine name is the name that God reveals to Moses in the burning bush. When we read LORD written (all caps) (LORD¹¹) in the Old Testament, this is usually always designating “the Name,” i.e., this is the way *Yahweh* is rendered in translation. The Name came to be considered so sacred that devout Jews do not pronounce it: instead, they say — appropriately and coincidentally — the word in Hebrew that also means Lord, *Adoni*.¹²

This “Name” of God in the Old Testament is important in our Liturgy and our iconography. In Exodus 3:14¹³ when Moses asks for God’s name he is told by God *ehayeh asher ehayeh* אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, which is usually translated *I am who am*. Thus we read:

⁹ Also called the Tetragrammaton, the “four letters.” See the discussion in the catechism of the Byzantine Catholic Churches, *Light for Life: Part One, The Mystery Believed*, (God With Us Publications, Pittsburgh, 1994),16. Also, Fr. John Breck, “Prayer of the Heart: Sacrament of the Presence of God,” *St. Vlad. Theo. Quart.*, **39**, 32-33 (1995).

¹⁰ i.e., probably vocalized as יְהוָה: *Yahveh’* (modern pronunciation using v) or *Yahweh’* (classical/ancient? pronunciation using w).

¹¹ When written LORD / GOD, this is the Tetragrammaton (the four letters, YHWH), the divine name *Yahweh* (יהוה) in the Hebrew. See Psalm 110.1: The LORD (*Yahweh*) says to my lord (*Adōn*).

נָאִם יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי

¹² אֲדֹנָי (pronounced like ahdōn-eye) is actually a plural of majesty with a possessive pronoun, literally “my Lords.” The singular form, “my Lord” is אֲדֹנָי (pronounced like ahdōn-knee). Both are from אֲדֹנָי, “lord” (ahdōn). Sometimes *the name* in Hebrew (הַשֵּׁם, pronounced ha-sheym) or in Aramaic (שְׁמָה, pronounced sh-ma; not to be confused with the Hebrew sh-ma, שְׁמַע, “Hear!” of Deuteronomy 6:4.) is said instead of יהוה.

It is customary to indicate the substitution of saying Adoni for the written יהוה / *Yahweh* by writing the consonants of the divine name but with the vowel pointings of Adoni אֲדֹנָי: this produces יְהוָה. This can be transcribed (Hebrew right to left) using J for consonant Y, and the current V instead of W for the letter *vav*, ך. Thus HWHY becomes HVHJ. Adding the vowels from Adoni, אֲדֹנָי, gives: HaVoHaJ. Writing this left to right, one gets Jehovah, the erroneous “name” of God, derived from the consonants of the true name but the vowels of a completely different word, Adoni, אֲדֹנָי.

¹³

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה Exodus 3:14
וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם:

NAB Exodus 3:13 “But,” said Moses to God, “when I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ if they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what am I to tell them?” 14 God replied, “I am who am.” (*ehayeh asher ehayeh*) Then he added, “This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM (*ehayeh*) sent me to you.”

This is not exactly the name *Yahweh*, but it is related to it linguistically;¹⁴ and in the next verse a direct link is made with this name (NAB Exodus 3:15):¹⁵

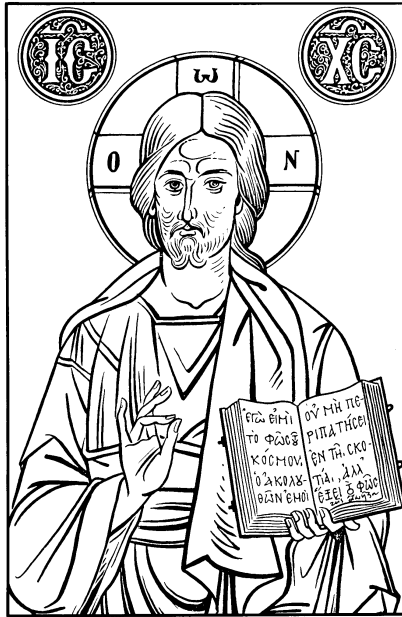
God spoke further to Moses, “Thus shall you say to the Israelites: יהוה [— The LORD, that is, *Yahweh* —] the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” This is my name forever; this is my title for all generations.

And so it is both name and title for us because, in the Greek test of the LXX, *I am who am* in verse 14 is translated as *egō eimi ho ōn* / ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν;¹⁶ and the I AM in verse 15 is also translated *ho ōn* / ὁ ὢν. What does this mean, and why is it important? Who is *ho ōn*? When you look at just about every icon of Christ, you see the answer of our Church. For there, in the nimbus around the

¹⁴ Hebrew does not have a verb of being in the sense that Greek or English does. But אֱהִיָּה (roughly *I am*) is from הִיָּה (roughly *he is*) which is believed to be related to יהוה (YHWH), the Name. There is also a short form *Yah* that is used in Hebrew names (for instance Yah-shua, Joshua) and in the exclamation *Praise Yah*, e.g. in the Typika Psalm: הַלְלֵי-יְהוָה (*hallu-Yah*) Psalm 146:1 – from הַלֵּל and יְהוָה. Here is an example of the translation using LORD for *Yah*: we sing “Praise the LORD, O my soul” for “Praise Yah, O my soul.” Using LORD/*Adōni* is an important tradition in that it forges a link with the uses of the term Lord for Jesus; but it does obscure the link with “the Name,” *Yahweh*, as the “proper name” of the one God, the God of Israel.

¹⁵ Exodus 3:15
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם
אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב שְׁלַחֲנִי אֵלֵיכֶם זֶה שְׁמִי לְעֹלָם
וְזֶה זְכָרִי לְדֹר דָּר:

¹⁶ The Greek uses two verbal forms, a verb, εἶμι, and a participle, ὢν, to translate the Hebrew which uses only one verb in all instances, אֱהִיָּה.



head of Jesus (↔ see icon¹⁷) — and only for icons of Jesus — is written these very words. This is because the Fathers associated the text of Exodus 3:14 with John 1:18 which uses this same expression (ὁ ὦν) to refer to Jesus explicitly (NAB John 1:18):

No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is (ὁ ὦν) at the Father’s side, has revealed him.¹⁸

And the verbal icon of our liturgy does the same. Listen to the blessing that closes Vespers:

Blessed is *The-One-Who-Is* [ὁ ὦν] blessed is Christ our God, always, now and ever, and forever!¹⁹

By the way, in the icon of Christ the Teacher, one of the traditional texts²⁰ written on the book is John 8:12 (as in the

above icon):

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”²¹

The *I am* in this verse is the other form that was used in Exodus 3:14, ἐγώ εἰμι. This expression is very rich theologically and can denote a theophany²² — God revealing Himself. There

¹⁷ Taken from *The Divine Liturgy* pew book, 4.

¹⁸ John 1:18 Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὦν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. There are other linguistic interpretations of this text that dispute the traditional one.

¹⁹ “Ὁ ὦν εὐλογητὸς Χριστὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, πάντοτε, νῦν, καὶ ἀεί, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων.

²⁰ The other is NAB Matthew 11:28 “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Δεῦτε πρὸς με πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι, κἀγὼ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς.

²¹ John 8:12 ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου· ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοὶ οὐ μὴ περιπατήσῃ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ, ἀλλ’ ἐξεῖ τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς. (See the book in the icon insert; for some reason, the last two words of the verse are omitted.)

²² The *I am* sayings of Jesus in the Gospels are much debated. To some extent, different views arise from the fact that in Greek *egō eimi* can mean *I am* or *I am he*. If a pronoun he/it (*autos*) is included as a predicate, *egō eimi autos*, the sense then is reflective and would be translated *It is I myself*, e.g., Luke 24:39, ἐγώ εἰμι αὐτός. John’s Gospel has the other predicated *I am* sayings. And this Gospel also stresses “the name,” for instance at the conclusion of the “first ending” of the Gospel, chapter 20.

Unpredicated uses of *I am* that are likely expressions of theophany are: washing the disciples feet (John 13:19); foretells his death (John 8:24, John 8:28); at arrest in the garden (John 18:5, John 18:6, John 18:8): the NAB indicates this by writing “I AM” in these instances. Others occurrences that can be interpreted as expressions of theophany are: when Jesus walks on the water (Matt 14:27, Mark 6:50, John 6:20); Jesus before the council (Mark 14:32, Luke 22:70); Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:26).

are many instances of this in the whole of Scripture, especially in the Gospel of St. John. And in the Old Testament it is especially clear in Exodus 6:2: God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD.”²³

And so, when we address Jesus as Lord, we profess our faith in Him as God — the God who spoke to Moses, the same God who became Man for us and for our salvation as we say in the Creed²⁴ — who fulfills all of the salvation history as recounted in the Old and New Testaments. Our Byzantine catechism notes: “At times prayers were even addressed *to* Jesus.”²⁵ If we stop to consider it, this is a “radical” belief that we Christians have — we worship a fellow human being: God in the flesh, God become Man, is very radical. A one word prayer that expresses this so well in our Liturgy is “Lover of Mankind” in Greek *philánthropos* (φιλάνθρωπος) — Jesus, the one great and true “philanthropist” by becoming one of us — the “Lover of Mankind.” Let us turn to the name of Jesus.

Jesus Ἰησοῦ (*Iesou*)

Names are very personal and especially in Scripture, the name is the person. We, as Christians, do say “the Name,” often, boldly, and with good reason.²⁶ We now have the image, the icon of the invisible God, because God became Man (NAB Colossians 1:15):²⁷

He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.²⁸

The **predicated** forms are: bread of life (John 6:35, John 6:48); bread from heaven (John 6:41); living bread (John 6:51); light of the world (John 8:12); gate (John 10:7, John 10:9); good shepherd (John 10:11, John 10:14); resurrection and the life (John 11:25); way and the truth and the life (John 14:6); true vine (John 15:1) and vine (John 15:5). Jesus witness to Himself (John 8:18), it seems to me, is also a predicate form.

The **absolute** form is “before Abraham came to be, I AM” (John 8:58) for which “they” wanted to stone Him (for blasphemy?).

The only other instance in the Gospels is the man born blind (John 9:9) where the man is simply replying “I am he.”

²³ ἐγὼ κύριος, יהוה יי: literally *I Lord* and *I Yahweh* respectively. Both Hebrew and Greek are here using a device available in these languages: verbless sentences.

²⁴ Τὸν δι’ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα.

²⁵ *Light for Life: Part Two, The Mystery Celebrated*, (God With Us Publications, Pittsburgh, 1996), 20.

²⁶ See also: *Light for Life: Part Two, The Mystery Celebrated*, (God With Us Publications, Pittsburgh), 20-21.

²⁷ The note in the NAB links this verse with John 1:18, which we have just been considering.

²⁸ Colossians 1:15 ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως

St. Paul teaches (NAB Philippians 2:10):

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,²⁹

And continuing (Philippians 2:11):

and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.³⁰

Our relationship with the Lord is one of intimacy, and so we say the name, Jesus. As He told us Himself, I call you friends (NAB John 15:15):

I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.³¹

This name, Jesus, is the name given Him by the angel who spoke to Joseph saying (NAB Matthew 1:21):

“She [Mary] will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”³²

This name, in Hebrew *Yeshua* / יֵשׁוּעַ,³³ is interpreted in this verse as being from *Yah* (יְהוָה), a form of *Yahweh*, the Name — recall what was discussed above — and *yasha* ‘ (יָשַׁע), to save, be saved, or be delivered.³⁴ We hear the Hebrew when we sing *hoshia-na* (הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא) / hosanna: please

²⁹ Philippians 2:10 ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων This recalls NRS Isaiah 45:23 By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: “To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”

בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי יֵצֵא מִפִּי צְדָקָה דְּבַר וְלֹא יָשׁוּב
כִּי־לִי תִכְרַע כָּל־בְּרִיךְ תִּשְׁבַּע כָּל־לְשׁוֹן:

³⁰ Philippians 2:11 καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.

³¹ John 15:15 οὐκέτι λέγω ὑμᾶς δούλους, ὅτι ὁ δούλος οὐκ οἶδεν τί ποιεῖ αὐτοῦ ὁ κύριος· ὑμᾶς δὲ εἵρηκα φίλους, ὅτι πάντα ἃ ἤκουσα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐγνώρισα ὑμῖν

³² Matthew 1:21 τέξεται δὲ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν· αὐτὸς γὰρ σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν.

³³ A note in the NAB for Mat 1:21 says: ‘Jesus: in first-century Judaism the Hebrew name Joshua [יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, *Yahoshua*;] (Greek Iesous [Ἰησοῦς]) meaning “Yahweh helps” was interpreted as “Yahweh saves.”’

³⁴ The feminine form הוֹשִׁיעָה, means help, deliverance, salvation; masculine form יֵשׁוּעַ

give salvation; please give victory.³⁵ In the Liturgy we sing “Hosanna in the highest” remembering the triumphal entry into Jerusalem,³⁶ Jesus as Savior. The words also recall (NAB Isaiah 6:3):

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!” they cried one to the other. “All the earth is filled with his glory!”³⁷

Jesus, our Savior, Lord/Yahweh of hosts, that is, the armies — like a conqueror, leading his troops, seated on a donkey, to victory on the cross.

This recalls another name that is very prominent in our liturgy, especially at Christmas. This is the name Immanuel,³⁸ (עִמָּנוּאֵל, 'Immanu-El), *God-is-with-us* or *God-with-us*³⁹ (Γκ Ηαμι Βογκ, *S' nami Boh*). Thus we read (NAB Isaiah 7:14):

Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.⁴⁰

Matthew quotes this verse right after saying that the child's name is Jesus, in fulfillment of the prophecy.

* * *

³⁵ Root עשׁ : verb hiphil imperative masculine singular paragogic heh. E.g.:

יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא אֲנָּא יְהוָה הַצְלִיחָה נָא Psalm 118:25

NRS Psalm 118:25 Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success! Psalm 117:25 ὦ κύριε σῶσον δὴ ὦ κύριε εὐλόγησον δὴ. Other occurrences: Jdg. 7:2, 2 Ki. 6:26, Ps. 12:2, Ps. 20:10, Ps. 28:9, Ps. 44:4, Ps. 60:7, Ps. 98:1, Ps. 108:7.

³⁶ Also note: NAB Psalm 28:9 Save your people, bless your inheritance; feed and sustain them forever! Psalm 27:9 σῶσον τὸν λαόν σου καὶ εὐλόγησον τὴν κληρονομίαν σου καὶ ποιῶμαι αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔπαρον αὐτοὺς ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος

הוֹשִׁיעָה אֶת־עַמֶּךָ וּבְרַךְ אֶת־נַחְלָתְךָ וּרְעֵם וּנְשִׂאֵם עַד־הָעוֹלָם: Psalm 28:9

³⁷ Isaiah 6:3 καὶ ἐκέκραγον ἕτερος πρὸς τὸν ἕτερον καὶ ἔλεγον ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος σαβαωθ πλήρης πάσα ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ

יְהוָה זֶה וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל־זֶה וְאָמַר קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ: Isaiah 6:3

³⁸ Noted also by Fr. John Breck, “Prayer of the Heart: Sacrament of the Presence of God,” *St. Vlad. Theo. Quart.*, **39**, 35 (1995).

³⁹ Since Hebrew has verbless sentences, both these literal translations are possible.

⁴⁰ Isaiah 7:14 διὰ τοῦτο δώσει κύριος αὐτὸς ὑμῖν σημεῖον ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Εμμανουηλ [Note that this verse from the LXX is quoted exactly by Matthew: cf footnote 24 following.]

לְכֵן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וּיִלְדֶת בֵּן וּקְרָאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּאֵל: Isaiah 7:14

When we say *Lord Jesus* we acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and in His “name” as revealed in both the Old and the New Covenants. Paul was ready to die for this name (NAB Acts 21:13):

“I am prepared not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”⁴¹

We also call upon this name when we, as Christians, say (NRS Proverbs 18:10):

The name of the LORD [i.e. יהוה, i.e. HWHY, i.e. *Yahweh*] is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe.⁴²

Christ, Χριστὲ (*Christe*)

Matthew traces the lineage of Jesus and concludes with (NAB Matthew 1:16) :

Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah.⁴³

Here is a direct link between the name of Jesus and the title Messiah. The Messiah — in Hebrew *Mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ) — means the Anointed One, in particular the anointed of the LORD, i.e. *Yahweh*. The *Anointed One* in Greek is *Christos* (Χριστός), Christ. In what I think is one of the most dramatic accounts in the Gospels, Luke tells of Jesus beginning His ministry in the Synagogue of Nazareth; there Jesus reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (NAB Luke 4:18⁴⁴):

“The Spirit of the Lord [κυρίου / *kuriou*] is upon me, because he has anointed [מָשַׁח / *mashach*; ἔχρισέν / *echrisen*] me to bring glad tidings [εὐαγγελίσασθαι, *euangelisasthai* = evangelize] to the poor.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Acts 21:13 ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐ μόνον δεθῆναι ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀποθανεῖν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐτοιμῶς ἔχω ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.

⁴² And not just “safe” but exalted, raise high: ὑψοῦνται, וַיִּשָׁבְבוּ. Proverbs 18:10 ἐκ μεγαλωσύνης ἰσχύος ὄνομα κυρίου αὐτῶ δὲ προσδραμόντες δίκαιοι ὑψοῦνται

מִגְדָּל־עֹז שֵׁם יְהוָה בּוֹ-יִרְוַץ צְדִיק וַיִּשָׁבְבוּ: Proverbs 18:10

⁴³ Matthew 1:16 Ἰακώβ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος χριστός.

⁴⁴ Quoting Isaiah 61:1. NAB Isaiah 61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ οὐ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς

רוּחַ יְהוָה עָלַי יְעַן מָשַׁח יְהוָה אֹתִי לְבַשֵּׁר עֲנָוִים Isaiah 61:1

⁴⁵ Luke 4:18 πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ οὐ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, quoting Isaiah. The full text (as also on the scroll in the icon) is: NAB Isaiah 61:1 <1> The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the

This is the beginning of the verses on the scroll that Jesus holds in the (Millennium) icon of *Christ the Evangelizer*. In the Old Testament, prophets, priests and kings are anointed;⁴⁶ and the king, in particular, is called the LORD's/Yahweh's Anointed. We, as Christians, are anointed after baptism; our anointing is in the Holy Spirit. We are seal in the mystery/sacrament of Chrismation and, in Christ, as Followers of Christ, as other Christs, we are a "royal priesthood"⁴⁷ (NAB 1 Peter 2:9-10 <1>⁴⁸):

brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, 2 To announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God, to comfort all who mourn; Isaiah 61:1 πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ οὐ εἶνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἀπέσταλκέν με ἰάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τῇ καρδίᾳ κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεςιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν 2 καλέσαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν καὶ ἡμέραν ἀνταποδόσεως παρακαλέσαι πάντας τοὺς πενθοῦντας

רוּחַ אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה עָלַי יֵעַן מָשַׁח יְהוָה אֹתִי
 לְבַשֵּׁר עֲנוּיִם שְׁלַחְנִי לְחַבֵּשׁ לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב לְקָרָא לְשִׁבוּיִם
 דְּרֹר וְלְאַסּוּרִים פְּקַח־קוֹחַ: 2 לְקָרָא שְׁנַת־רְצוֹן לַיהוָה
 יוֹם נָקָם לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ לְנַחֵם כָּל־אֲבֵלִים:

⁴⁶ See on the anointing of: the high priest (Ex 29:29, Le 4:3,5,16, 6:20, Lev 8:12, Numbers 3:3); the king (1Sa 16:13 2Sa 2:4, Jdgs 9:8, 1 Sam 9:16; 16:12-13 Ps 132:10); prophets (1Ki 19:16 1Ch 16:22 Ps 105:15).

⁴⁷ The noted Orthodox theologian, Metropolitan John of Pergamon, John D Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), 216, writes: The immediate and inevitable result of baptism and confirmation was that the newly baptized would *take his particular "place" in the eucharistic assembly, i.e. that he would become a layman*. That this implies ordination is clear from the fact that the baptized person does not simply become a "Christian," as we tend to think, but he becomes a *member of a particular "ordo" in the eucharistic community*. Once this is forgotten, it is easy to speak of the laity as "non-ordained" and thus arrive at the possibility—witnessed to by the history of the Church in a dramatic way—of either making the layman an unnecessary [sic] element in the eucharistic community (hence the "private mass" [I dispute his interpretation of this.] and the entire issue of clericalism) or of making him the basis of all "orders," as if he were not himself a specifically defined order¹⁹ but a generic source or principle (hence the prevailing view of "the priesthood of all believers" in all its variations). ¹⁹Cf. *I Clem.* 40.3—41.7: no confusion of "orders" or transgression from one "order" to another is permissible. This implies that the "layman" is also an "order" (τάγμα or τάξις)." He continues, 221: "Thus the particular ministries of (i) the laity, (ii) the deacons, (iii) the presbyters and (iv) the bishop, clearly evidenced with St Ignatius, became the indispensable ministries of the Church ..."

⁴⁸ The note in the NAB traces the allusions to the Old Testament: "NAB 1Pe 2:9: <1> [9-10] The prerogatives of ancient Israel mentioned here are now more fully and fittingly applied to the Christian people: "a chosen race" (cf Isaiah 43:20-21) indicates their divine election (Eph 1:4-6); "a royal priesthood" (cf Exodus 19:6) to serve and worship God in Christ, thus continuing the priestly functions of his life, passion, and resurrection; "a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6) reserved for God, a people he claims for his own (cf Malachi 3:17) in virtue of their baptism into his death and resurrection. This transcends all natural and national divisions and unites the people into one community to glorify the one who led them from the darkness of paganism to the light of faith in Christ. From being "no people" deprived of all mercy, they have become the very people of God, the chosen recipients of his mercy (cf Hosea 1:9; 2:23).

But you are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were “no people” but now you are God’s people; you “had not received mercy” but now you have received mercy.⁴⁹

The link between anointing and the Spirit is brought out very clearly in the anointing of David⁵⁰ as King (NAB 1 Samuel 16:13):

Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.⁵¹

In Acts when Peter preaches the good news to the Gentiles, he speaks of (NAB Acts 10:38):

how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth <1> with the holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.⁵²

The great theophany of the Trinity at the baptism of Jesus⁵³ was His being proclaimed as **Son** by the **Father** and His “anointing” by the **Holy Spirit** (NAB Mark 1:9):

⁴⁹ 1 Peter 2:9 ὑμεῖς δὲ γένος ἐκλεκτόν, βασιλείον ἱεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν, ὅπως τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐξαγγείλητε τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς· 10 οἳ ποτε οὐ λαὸς νῦν δὲ λαὸς θεοῦ, οἱ οὐκ ἠληθμένοι νῦν δὲ ἐλεηθέντες.

⁵⁰ One would be correct to consider David the preeminent Messianic figure of the Old Testament. He is referred to as the (NAB 2 Samuel 23:1) “Anointed of the God of Jacob מְשִׁיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב. But what appears the most direct use and application of the title is rather unexpected: it is not even for a Jew, but for the Persian king, Cyrus, who returned the Jews to Jerusalem from their exile in Babylon. Isaiah writes “Thus says Yahweh to His Anointed, to Cyrus, כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה לְמֹשִׁיחוֹ לְכוֹרֶשׁ” Isaiah 45:1. The combination of David and Cyrus as Messianic figures was in the news stemming from the February, 1993, incident in Waco, Texas involving the Branch Davidians cult. Their leader and would-be “Messiah” took for himself the name David Koresh. In Hebrew, the name Cyrus is כּוֹרֶשׁ (pronounced *choresh*, *ch* as in *Bach*), Koresh.

⁵¹ 1 Samuel 16:13 καὶ ἔλαβεν Σαμουηλ τὸ κέρασ τοῦ ἐλαίου καὶ ἔχρισεν αὐτὸν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐφίλητο πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπὶ Δαυιδ ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης

וַיִּקַּח שְׂמוֹאל אֶת-קֶרֶן הַשֶּׁמֶן וַיִּמְשַׁח אֹתוֹ 1 Samuel 16:13
בְּקֶרֶב אֶחָיו וַתִּצְלַח רוּחַ-יְהוָה אֶל-דָּוִד מִהַיּוֹם הַהוּא וּמְעַלְהָ

⁵² Acts 10:38 Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέθ, ὡς ἔχρισεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ δυνάμει, ὃς διήλθεν εὐεργετῶν καὶ ἰώμενος πάντας τοὺς καταδυναστευομένους ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἦν μετ’ αὐτοῦ.

⁵³ Thus we sing the Troparion of the Theophany: “At Your baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, worship of the Trinity was revealed, for the Father’s voice bore witness to You, calling You His “beloved Son”, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words. O Christ God, Who appeared and enlightened the world, glory be to you!”

It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” At once the Spirit drove him out into the desert.⁵⁴

We have “put on Christ” — “All you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” — we must also be driven by the Spirit⁵⁵ as was Jesus, the Son.

Consider Peters sermon in Acts where the three “names” just considered are said together: NAB Acts 2:36 Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” BGT Acts 2:36 ἀσφαλῶς οὖν γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε.

Son of God, Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ (*Huie tou Theou*)

Jesus: The Christ (Χριστός) — the Anointed-One, the Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ) — the Son (Υἱός). Son recalls the Trinity: Jesus is the Son, the second Person of the Trinity. Here we note especially Peter’s profession of faith — his acknowledgment of Jesus (NAB Matthew 16:13):

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

Jesus usually refers to Himself as the enigmatic figure the Son of Man.⁵⁶ Answering for the disciples (NAB Matthew 16:16):

Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”⁵⁷

What does it mean for us that Jesus is the Son of God? St. Paul explains (RSV Galatians 4:4):

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into

⁵⁴ Mark 1:9 Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου. 10 καὶ εὐθὺς ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν· 11 καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν· σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα. 12 Καὶ εὐθὺς τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον

⁵⁵ Galatians 3:27 ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε.

⁵⁶ See the books of Daniel and Ezekiel for the occurrence of this term in the Old Testament.

⁵⁷ Matthew 16:16 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος εἶπεν· σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος.

our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 7 So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

God sent forth his **Son** so that we might become **sons** (and not sons and daughters, or children as trendy translations would have it). The concept of *sonship* in Galatians is intimately linked to Paul’s argument about Abraham, the “father.”⁵⁸ Consequently, it is in Gal that humanity’s status is most forcefully linked to Trinitarian language and “personality.”⁵⁹ Our God is the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and Gal provides the most explicit (and quite reasonable) affirmation of the direct association of humanity / creation with the person of the Son. We are “sons in the Son.”⁶⁰ The message of Gal 4:4-7, pared to the essence, is that God (the Father) sent forth His Son that we might become sons.⁶¹ It is understandable that scripture is reserved in ascribing *sonship*: it is primarily, almost exclusively,⁶² used in reference to Jesus, and rightly so. Galatians’ radical message is that

⁵⁸ Dieter Lührmann, *Galatians: A Continental Commentary*, (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1992.) 81, however, puts the emphasis on faith; i.e. for him Gal 3:6-4:7 is primarily echoing and interpreting Gen 15:6.

⁵⁹ In Gal, of the 9 occurrence of forms of υἱός (Ga. 1:16, Gal 2:20, Gal 3:7, Gal 3:26, Gal 4:4, Gal 4:6, Gal 4:7, Gal 4:22, Gal 4:30) all except Gal 4:22 use son in reference to *sonship* as in the pericope, or as the offspring of Abraham (the father), or Christ. The 5 occurrences of forms of τέκνον (Gal 4:19, Gal 4:25, Gal 4:27, Gal 4:28, Gal 4:31) are used less specifically. Paul’s anthropology is less developed explicitly in terms of *sonship* in Romans; that is, Romans presents a view similar to the Galatians pericope, but generally substitutes τέκνον for the υἱός of the corresponding statements in Gal; cf. Rom 8:14-9:26.

⁶⁰ “Filli in Filio.” In the phrase of Emil Mersch, *The Theology of the Mystical Body* (B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis 1955) 325. And the CCC: 2009 Filial adoption, in making us partakers by grace in the divine nature, can bestow true merit on us as a result of God’s gratuitous justice. This is our right by grace, the full right of love, making us “co-heirs” with Christ and worthy of obtaining “the promised inheritance of eternal life.”[60 Council of Trent (1547): DS 1546.] The merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness.[61 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1548.] “Grace has gone before us; now we are given what is due.... Our merits are God’s gifts.”[62 St. Augustine, *Sermo* 298, 4-5: PL 38, 1367.]

⁶¹ The force of the analogy is likely lost under the demands of inclusive language. It is necessary, however, to accept the NT terminology and to understand it in the inclusive sense. One notes that the LXX often substitutes τέκνον, *teknon* / *child* for the Semitic preference of בן = υἱός, *son*; *a fortiori* then the retention of the sense of υἱός when the language and writer has the form τέκνον available and chooses not to use it. The point here (as noted in a previous paper *Augsburg, Constantinople and Trent: An Examination of Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic Beliefs, Concerns and Interactions at the Time of the Western Church’s Reformation*, A. Kotlar, October 1995) is that our status is not that of adopted children, or even adopted sons and daughters. *Sonship* is prior to sexual distinctions if one considers that the Trinity of Persons (and therefore the Son) is the primordial ontological entity. **Regardless of our human sexuality, our calling is to be sons.**

Also, Geoffrey Wainwright, *Worship With One Accord* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1997) 245, in reference to G. Florovsky, writes: “The Word incarnate can *define* language. In this context, “Father” and “Son” *mean* who the first two persons of the Trinity are and what the relation between them *is*. It is the divine ontology that sets the meaning of the terms...”

⁶² Very exclusively in John’s Gospel.

we too are sons — adopted sons (υιοθεσίαν), but *sons* (υιοί) nevertheless. The teleological connection, our ultimate destiny, is established.⁶³ Through the mystery of baptism, Paul tells us, we have “put on Christ” (Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε⁶⁴), we become Christ.⁶⁵ We are born children of the new Adam: we are His body, because we too are sons; we are His body, therefore, we too are sons. Ephesians expresses the intended unity with startling brevity (4:5): εἷς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἐν βάπτισμα.⁶⁶ And the Father of Jesus the Son is our Father too, as Jesus Himself taught us.⁶⁷

* * *

Before proceeding to the final petition, I just want to mention that our prayer so far, as an invocation, uses the same words that our fellow Christians of the early Church used to form a sign from an anagram. The sign/symbol was the fish, in Greek ἰχθύς / *ichthus*, in capitals, ΙΧΘΥΣ.⁶⁸ The anagram spells out a profession of faith:

Ἰησοῦς (Jesus) Χριστός (Christ) Θεοῦ (of God) Υἱός (Son) Σωτήρ (Savior).

Jesus Christ is Son of God and Savior. We do not explicitly use the word *Savior* in the *Jesus Prayer*, but that Jesus is our Savior is the essence of the last petition.

have mercy on me [a sinner]. ἐλέησόν με [τὸν ἁμαρτωλὸν]⁶⁹ (*eleēson me ton hamartōlon*)

Here I recall the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee⁷⁰ (NAB Luke 18:13):

⁶³ Cf. Eph 1:3-5: ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ...προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υιοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν. How is finite creation reckoned with an infinite God? It cannot be a part of God since this would mean God is divisible. Nor can it be apart from God, since this would produce a duality. The Incarnation demonstrates that there is a solution: it is the Son who becomes Man, and we are εἰς αὐτόν.

⁶⁴ Gal 3:27

⁶⁵ An example of the extent of this association is given by the Orthodox theologian Metropolitan (Bishop) John Zizioulas in *Being as Communion* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, 1993) 182: “*Christ without His body is not Christ but an individual of the worse type.*” [The italics for emphasis are his.]

⁶⁶ A total unity stressed even grammatically by using the three (gender) forms of *one*: *heis*(m), *mia*(f), *hen*(n).

⁶⁷ Matt 6:9ff, Luke 11:2ff.

⁶⁸ A later form of Σ is C.

⁶⁹ Not *ton harmatōlon* (a typo?) as in Fr. John Breck, “Prayer of the Heart: Sacrament of the Presence of God,” *St. Vlad. Theo. Quart.*, **39**, 28n6, (1995), but *ton hamartōlon*, τὸν ἁμαρτωλὸν.

⁷⁰ Recalling, too, we must be careful not to add hubris to our sinfulness, or to beat the other person's breast for them, instead of our own. I came across this little story recently [found at <http://www.cin.org/archives/cineast/200006/0118.html>]: cineast 210 Date: Wed, 7 Jun 2000 09:42:09 EDT

But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’⁷¹

The Greek word ἐλέησον (*eleison*) is from ἔλεος (*eleos*) — mercy — very often in the LXX translates the Hebrew word רַחֵם *hesed* (for instance in the polyeleos Psalm 136⁷²). *hesed* means steadfast love, compassion, loving-kindness, tenderness. Our prayer for mercy, then, “is not a simple plea for pardon, but a supplication that God continue to show His love to us.”⁷³ *hesed* is faithful love, covenant love (NAB John 3:16):

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.⁷⁴

And that we might taste eternal life even now, He gives us Himself (NAB John 6:54):

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day,⁷⁵

thereby saving us from sin, from our sins, and from death. Death and sin go hand-in-hand, as St. Paul tells us (Romans 5:12, 17):

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned⁷⁶ ... If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the

From: SLKAssoc@aol.com]:

It’s the eve of Yom Kippur, and the Rabbi comes in early to begin his prayers. Standing before the tabernacle, he pounds his breast and proclaims, “I am not worthy, I am not worthy!” A while later, the Cantor comes in, sees what the Rabbi is doing, and begins to follow suit, so that the two of them are chanting, “I am not worthy!” A few moments later, the Janitor pokes his head in, sees the Rabbi and the Cantor, and joins them, pounding his breast, and shouting, “I am not worthy”. At this point, the Rabbi noticing the Janitor, turns to the Cantor, and says, “Nu [a yiddish term?] look who thinks he’s not worthy!”

⁷¹ Luke 18:13 ὁ δὲ τελώνης μακρόθεν ἐστὼς οὐκ ἤθελεν οὐδὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπάραι εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, ἀλλ’ ἔτυπτεν τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ λέγων· ὁ θεός, ἰλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ.

⁷² πολυέλεος, from πολύ, *much*, and ἔλεος, *mercy*. The refrain of the psalm is: ὅτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ; כִּי לְעַלְמֵי עַד

⁷³ Fr. Thomas Hopko, *The Lenten Spring* (Crestwood, NY, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1983) 62.

⁷⁴ John 3:16 οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενηὴ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

⁷⁵ John 6:54 ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἶμα ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον, καὶ γὰρ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ·μέρα.

⁷⁶ Romans 5:12 Διὰ τοῦτο ὡς περ δι’ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν, ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον·

abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.⁷⁷

The link between sin and death goes back to Eden and the Fall.⁷⁸ Likewise sin and death are linked through the cross (NAB 1 Peter 2:24):

He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.⁷⁹

Therefore, we pray, as does the deacon⁸⁰ when incensing during the Liturgy (NAB Psalm 51:3-4):

Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness; in your abundant compassion blot out my offense. Wash away all my guilt; from my sin cleanse me⁸¹

Though sinful and fallen we retain the image in which we were created, your image, O Lord. And you have promised us restoration (NAB Isaiah 1:18):

⁷⁷ Romans 5:17 εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἑνὸς παραπτώματι ὁ θάνατος ἐβασίλευσεν διὰ τοῦ ἑνός, πολλῶ μᾶλλον οἱ τὴν περισσεΐαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύουσιν διὰ τοῦ ἑνὸς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

⁷⁸ The usual word for sin, *chattat*, חַטָּאת, is not encountered in Genesis until God warns Cain (NRS Genesis 4:7): sin is lurking at the door, לַפֶּתַח רֵבִץ חַטָּאת רֵבִץ. “Original sin” (west), or the “ancestral fault” (east; see Resurrectional tone 4 troparion “τὴν προγοντικὴν ἀπόφασιν” from προγοντικός parental and ἀπόφασις, sentence /judgement) is ontological “sin” and therefore it is a very *personal* sin — involving the one and the many — as opposed to an *individual’s* sin. This is the most personal of sins because it involves the community of Mankind (not just one, but the many); it pertains to the communion that is at the core of the meaning of the term person as someone who is in relationship with others. While the ancestral fault is surely sin, Byzantine theology follows scripture in focusing on death (cf also Sirach 25:24). The thrust of the account of the Fall in Genesis is forceful and clear. There is a direct comparison of correct eating with forbidden eating and dying, using the same Hebrew grammatical construction for emphasis in each case: infinitive and verb; i.e. literally *to eat (you) eat* (Gen. 2:16 אָכַל תֹּאכַל, *a’chōl tō’chēl*) versus *to die (you) die*. (Gen. 2:17 מוֹת תָּמוּת, *mōt tamut*) [you is masculine singular since there is only Adam at this point]. Less literally in English we might say that God says: Of all the trees, eating eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, if you eat of it, dying you will die (die the death) -- for emphasis.

⁷⁹ 1 Peter 2:24 ὅς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον, ἵνα ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἀπογενόμενοι τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ ζήσωμεν, οὐ τῷ μῶλωπι ἰάθητε.

⁸⁰ Who says the entire psalm silently.

⁸¹ Psalm 50:3 ἐλέησόν με ὁ θεός κατὰ τὸ μέγα ἔλεός σου καὶ κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν σου ἐξάλειψον τὸ ἀνόμημά μου 4 ἐπὶ πλεῖον πλῦνόν με ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνομίας μου καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας μου καθάρισόν με.

Psalm 51:3 אֱלֹהִים כְּחֶסֶדְךָ כָּרַב רַחֲמֶיךָ מִחַה כְּשָׁעֵי:

4 (הַרְבֵּה) (הַרְבֵּה) כְּבִסְנִי מַעֲוֵנִי וּמַחַטְאֹתַי טַהַרְנִי:

Come now, let us set things right, says the LORD: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; Though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool⁸²

And as we pray in the beautiful words of the Parastas:⁸³

O Lord I am the image of your glory which is beyond description, even though I bear the marks of transgressions. Have mercy on your creature. O Master, in your compassion cleanse me. Grant me the home I yearn for, and again make me an inhabitant of Paradise.... In the beginning You called me from nothingness and favored me with Your divine image. Since I transgressed Your commandments You returned me to the earth from which I was taken. Restore me to your Likeness, that my original beauty may be renewed in me.

* * *

The *Jesus Prayer* is a profound spiritual proclamation and invocation of “the Name.” What the *Jesus Prayer* is not, however, is a substitute, a replacement, for the great prayer of the Church, the Liturgy, especially the Divine Liturgy. Rather, this *Jesus Prayer* must be formed within us and become a personal, spiritual fulfillment of the liturgy — something that we take forth from the liturgy to the world. We hear sometimes the expression “the liturgy after the Liturgy”; the *Jesus Prayer* is that verbal, even if silent, icon that we carry in procession when we leave the house of God, the holy temple that is our church, and return to our daily activities.

I hope that this meditation/study of mine on the words of the *Jesus Prayer* will be a source of background and enrichment in saying this prayer. The *Jesus Prayer* affirms and renews in us the proclamation of God’s greatest revelation, Jesus; and God’s revelation is, for us, sustenance and leaven, a harvest that grows the more by reaping. Let us pray it often even without ceasing.⁸⁴ The Catholic Catechism has this to say on this point:

⁸²

לְכוּנָא וְנִזְכָּחָה יְאִמֵר יְהוָה אִם־יְהִי חֲטָאֵיכֶם
בְּשָׁנִים כְּשֶׁלֶג יִלְבִּינוּ אִם־יֵאָדְיִמוּ כְּתוֹלַע כְּצֶמֶר יְהִי:

⁸³ Byzantine rite, Byzantine Seminary Press Pittsburgh 1983, 12.

⁸⁴ NAB Luke 18:1 <1> Then he [Jesus] told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. Luke 18:1 Ἐλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ μὴ ἐγκακεῖν: the parable of the widow and the unjust judge. And: NAB 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε, 18 ἐν παντὶ εὐχαριστεῖτε· τοῦτο γὰρ θέλημα θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς. See also the interesting discussion in: *Light for Life: Part Two, The Mystery Celebrated*, (God With Us Publications, Pittsburgh, 1996), 20ff.

2745 Prayer and Christian life are inseparable, for they concern the same love and the same renunciation, proceeding from love; the same filial and loving conformity with the Father's plan of love; the same transforming union in the Holy Spirit who conforms us more and more to Christ Jesus; the same love for all men, the love with which Jesus has loved us. "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he [will] give it to you. This I command you, to love one another." [41 Jn 15:16-17]. He "prays without ceasing" who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer. Only in this way can we consider as realizable the principle of praying without ceasing. [42 Origen, De orat. 12: PG 11, 452c.]

The details I have presented, in themselves, are not important so long as they are well expended as fuel or even just a spark for saying this prayer of the heart with ever increasing devotion.